

Getting the Message Out

Maine State Planning Office

Waste Management & Recycling Program



The success of your recycling program is directly related to the amount of participation your program receives. The impact of public awareness on maintaining and increasing participation cannot be overstressed. To achieve that goal, every citizen and participating business must know how the program works, what materials are included and what is expected of them as participants.

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

It is important to do some pre-planning before kicking off your public education program. Who will do the work? Who will hear your message? What strategies will you use? Such planning ensures that a wide variety of individuals in the community are reached regularly and systematically.

CREATING THE MESSAGE

In planning and carrying out a promotional campaign, do not assume environmental issues are everyone's primary concern, nor that everyone is eager to recycle. The message of your educational efforts should be two-fold: 1) promotional as to why to recycle; and 2) instructional as to what and how to recycle.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

There are numerous ways of reaching the public with the recycling message. Develop innovative ways especially suited to your own situation of reaching the public. Use more than one medium to reach the largest number of citizens and businesses as is possible.

Local Civic Groups

Draw on local groups such as garden clubs, scouts, Rotary, Kiwanas, Lions, Chamber of Commerce and others to publicize your program. Attend their meetings and talk to them about your recycling program.

Pamphlet/Flyers

Develop a pamphlet or flyer describing your recycling program. Distribute these through the mail to each household, at the recycling center, through the schools or as billing inserts.

Local Logo or Slogan

Develop a local logo or slogan (through a school or community-wide contest) that can be used on promotional flyers, recycling center signs, containers, drop-off boxes and awards. The logo/slogan will make the program more visible.

Local Media

Interest local newspapers and radio stations in your program and give them information that might make a story. Have someone on your recycling committee write a recycling column for the local paper. Newspapers, radio stations or TV stations are willing to run public service announcement at no cost.

Newsletters

Put together a regular newsletter about the town's program. Mail this directly to residents, include with tax bill mailing or publish it in the town report.

Promotional Materials

Use postcards, inserts in utility or tax bills, special posters, bumper stickers, t-shirts, doorhangers and signs. Prominently display a "waste meter" so residents can see how they are achieving the town's goals. Have prepared informational packets for new town residents.

Block Leaders/Volunteers

The most effective way to reach people is through their neighbors. Solicit volunteers to canvas each neighborhood or street, knock on doors, distribute information or hold neighborhood meetings to explain the recycling program. Involve the community's recycling committee in this effort.

Curbside Containers

Using brightly colored recycling containers is an excellent promotional technique. They are a constant reminder about recycling. Ask local businesses to help purchase containers and print their advertising logo on them. By using the media to make announcements, even the container distribution can be promotional in itself. Place flyers and educational literature inside containers.

Schools

Presentations to individual classes and school assemblies are another effective way to promote your program. Students are enthused about recycling and take their enthusiasm home to the parents and family.

Special Events

Special events, such as contests, fairs and open houses at the recycling center, can spark and maintain citizen interest in the program. To promote recycling, hold contests in the schools, schedule special activities, put out promotional materials or sponsor a booth at local fairs and craft shows.

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that public education programs must be ongoing, since people may lose interest or forget, new people move to town, seasonal residents come and tourists visit. In order to continue to have good participation, you must constantly promote your program - it is as simple as that!

For more information, please contact:
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